



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **WESTERN GOVERNORS**

#### **California**

Gavin Newsom (D) took office as California's new governor on January 7. "California has always helped write America's future. And we know the decisions we make, would be important at any time. But what we do today is even more consequential, because of what's happening in our country. People's lives, freedom, security, the water we drink, the air we breathe – they all hang in the balance. The country is watching us. The world is waiting on us. The future depends on us. And we will seize this moment." <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2019/01/07/newsom-inaugural-address/>.

#### **Colorado**

Jared Polis (D) was sworn in as Colorado's 43<sup>rd</sup> governor on January 8. "Our mission now is to make Colorado a place for all families to have a chance to thrive today, tomorrow and for generations to come," Polis said after taking the oath of office. "There is nothing Colorado needs to do that Coloradans can't get done....We will always value bold ideas and new approaches....We will never be outworked....We will never be stunted by a lack of imagination." <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/01/08/jared-polis-inauguration-gay-governor-colorado/>.

#### **Idaho**

On January 4, Brad Little (R) was sworn in as the 33<sup>rd</sup> Governor of Idaho. During his inaugural address, Little highlighted some of his priorities for his Administration, touching on education, the economy and restoring Idahoans' confidence in state government. "When I took the oath of office today, I promised to work for all Idahoans," Little said. "I will show up every day for every citizen." <https://gov.idaho.gov/pressrelease/brad-little-sworn-in-as-33rd-governor-of-idaho/>.

#### **Nevada**

On January 7, Steve Sisolak (D) was sworn in as Governor of Nevada. Sisolak, who is the first Democratic governor of the state in two decades. In his inaugural address, Governor Sisolak laid out his vision of

what it means to be Nevada proud and the bright future the state has before it. "For more than 150 years, Nevadans have been masters of defying expectations," said Governor Sisolak. "We are dogged innovators, restless entrepreneurs, roll-up-our-sleeves pioneers. We turned desert into farmland, a sleepy settler town into a worldwide destination. We've never been daunted by hard work or hard times." [http://gov.nv.gov/News/Press/2019/Steve\\_Sisolak\\_Sworn\\_in\\_as\\_Governor\\_of\\_Nevada/](http://gov.nv.gov/News/Press/2019/Steve_Sisolak_Sworn_in_as_Governor_of_Nevada/).

#### **South Dakota**

Kristi Noem (R) took her oath of office on January 5, in the State Capitol Rotunda. She's the 33<sup>rd</sup> governor and first woman to hold the office. Noem, a former Congresswoman, addressed a full room in Pierre as she set a forward-looking tone for her four years of leadership. Her inauguration address focused on her goal to solve problems for future generations in South Dakota from the meth crisis to strengthening schools to keeping taxes low. "The oath that I just took is a promise and a commitment to everyone in this state. I promise to govern in a manner that will benefit all South Dakotans," Noem said. <https://www.argusleader.com/story/news/politics/2019/01/05/read-south-dakota-gov-kristi-noem-full-inauguration-speech-governor/2490446002/>.

#### **Utah**

Utah Governor Gary Herbert (R) proposed nearly \$50 million in new funding to improving the efficient use of water statewide and reduce Utah's per capita water use. While the costs of this effort are sizable and the primary responsibility remains at the local level, the Governor recommends that \$20 million in one-time funds, with the primary focus on providing matching grants and loans to meter all municipal and industrial (M&I) water use within a 10-15 years. The Governor recommends \$2 million to improve water metering practices and technology at state facilities, including the state capitol complex, and \$10 million for schools. He asks for nearly \$2.2 million for improved water practices, including billing that better informs water users of their water use. In addition, the Governor recommends \$15 million in one-time funds to both study and implement agricultural water efficiency alternatives.

## Wyoming

On January 7, Mark Gordon (R) took the oath of office becoming the Governor of Wyoming and laying out his vision for Wyoming in his first inaugural address. He called for fiscal prudence, growing communities rather than government, and a focus on innovation for the future. “We live in complicated times, and the trust you have placed in me is daunting. But, I assume this office with confidence and with an unbounding faith in our people.” <https://governor.wyo.gov/media/news-releases/governor-outlines-vision-1719>.

### **CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES** **NOAA/NIDIS/Weather Forecasting**

On January 7, the President signed S.2200 into law, the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Reauthorization Act (Pub. L. 115-423). The Senate passed the bipartisan legislation unanimously on December 18, and the House passed the bill on December 20 by a vote of 379-9. The Western Governors’ Association sent a letter supporting the bill last August. (WSW #2311)

The bill reauthorizes the NIDIS program (15 U.S.C. §313d), and authorizes a gradual increase in appropriations, from \$13.5M for FY2019 up to \$14.5M in FY2023. The bill authorizes partnerships with the private sector to improve drought monitoring, forecasting, and communications. It directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to develop a strategy for a national coordinated soil moisture monitoring network. It also expands the NIDIS program to include partnerships to improve seasonal to sub-seasonal precipitation and temperature forecasts, and low flow water predictions.

The bill reauthorizes the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act. The bill authorizes gradual increases in appropriations, from \$26.5M in FY2019 to \$28.5M in FY2023 for the agriculture weather and climate information provisions (15 U.S.C. §8521). For the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) (15 U.S.C. §8519), appropriations are authorized to gradually increase from \$136M for FY2019 up to \$154M in FY2023.

OAR is directed to expand the forecasting program by removing barriers and improving collaboration on numerical weather prediction, and creating a publicly accessible global weather research modeling system. NOAA is authorized to enter agreements to upgrade its computing capabilities, and to create pilot programs to assess new technology to improve processing speed, cybersecurity, and reliability. NOAA is also directed to analyze, test, plan, and evaluate the value and benefits of future data sources, including cost-effective or disaggregated satellite architectures and corresponding

ground system elements, identified in NOAA’s Satellite Observing System Architecture Study.

The bill authorizes the integration of ocean and coastal sensor data, with infrastructure necessary to share and analyze the data in real-time for predictive early warning systems. The National Weather Service is directed to improve the Cooperative Observer Program—which includes observations of drought conditions, snow, and hazardous weather events—in coordination with States, the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Geological Survey, to support existing programs and increase participation, to leverage opportunities to grow the network, and effective use of infrastructure and weather stations.

Funding for the National Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Program, and the comprehensive research plan and action strategy, is authorized to continue at \$20.5M a year through FY2023. The interagency task force is expanded to include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The bill also provides authority for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or NOAA to declare, on their own initiative or at the request of a governor, that a harmful algal bloom is an event of national significance. Considerations include toxicity, severity, relative size, geographic scope, economic impact, and potential to spread or cross municipal, state, or international boundaries. Once a declaration has been made, the federal agency is authorized to contribute funds up to a 50% cost share “for the purposes of assessing and mitigating the detrimental environmental, economic, subsistence use, and public health effects of the event of national significance.”

Senator John Thune (R-SD), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and sponsor of the bill, said: “I introduced this bill a little over a year ago as South Dakota farmers and ranchers were recovering from a significantly dry year, which resulted in drought conditions that affected large areas of the state. It was a good reminder that Congress must do everything it can to update and modernize drought tools like NIDIS, which our farmers and ranchers depend on to stay up-to-date and fully informed on drought conditions in their area.”

### **PEOPLE**

The WSWC is pleased to announce the hiring of Adel Abdallah, as a Senior Hydroinformatics Specialist. Adel, previously an intern with the WSWC, will continue to work on the Water Data Exchange (WaDE) program. Adel is finishing up his PhD in Water Resources Engineering at Utah State University. During his PhD research, Adel designed a Water Management Data Model (WaMDaM), and software tools that organize data for water systems infrastructure across datasets and models. He also interned with USAID’s Water Program.

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**The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is an organization of representatives appointed by the Governors of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.**